



JUSTIN GRAFTON STUDIOS/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Attendees join in for Christmas carols during the gala at last year's Festival of Trees, an annual fundraiser put on by the Providence Seaside Foundation. Local organizations, businesses and individuals sponsor and decorate trees, auctioned off during the live auction.

## Festival of Trees to ring in holiday season for 18th year

### Providence Seaside Foundation raising funds for new surgical equipment

By Katherine Lacaze  
Seaside Signal

The Providence Seaside Foundation hopes to dazzle, delight and raise funds for new surgical equipment during the 2015 Festival of Trees, an annual tradition.

The festival will ring in the holiday season for the 18th year, Saturday, Dec. 5, with a free public open house from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and a gala dinner and auction starting at 5 p.m. Both events will take place at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

The festival "is sort of the premier event of the holiday season," executive director Kimberly Ward said. Since the event takes place in early December, it puts people in the mood for the holiday season, she added. "People have really embraced it and come to anticipate it."

During the public open house, families can visit Santa Claus, enjoy refreshments, decorate cookies, do craft activities and face-painting and view the display of decorated trees.

That evening, the gala starts with a champagne reception, socialization and a silent auction. Acustica World Music will provide music and guests will again have an opportunity to peruse the holiday tree entries. The selection of silent auction items at the gala, donated by the local community, will include wreaths, vacation getaways, gift baskets, gift certificates, artwork and more.

"It's going to be a great variety, something for everyone," Ward said.



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Each tree at Providence Seaside Foundation's annual Festival of Trees fundraiser is decorated with a theme that matches the item being auctioned off during the evening gala.

### Magical trees, beautiful art

Dinner and the live auction for the trees will begin about 6:30 p.m. The trees, 22 this year, are the highlight of the event, Ward said. They are sponsored by local organizations, businesses and individuals. Several hospital staff members participate, and this year, three trees are coming from the staff of the hospital's surgical department, the event's beneficiary.

"The trees are so beautiful and all of the donors and the designers just put their heart and soul into creating

them," Ward said. "It's just magical."

Each tree is decorated with a theme to match its accompanying giveaway item. The entries this year include a Hawaiian-themed tree that includes an eight-night trip to Maui, including a stay at a two-bedroom condominium near the beach and \$1,000 in airfare; a "Classic Romance In the Wine Country"-themed tree that includes a stay at The Inn At Abeja in Walla Walla, Wash., a wine tour and a gift certificate for a local restaurant; and a tree themed "Scandinavia Christmas from Astoria," sponsored by FinnWare, featuring gift certificates for area attractions, including Baked Alaska and the Cannery Pier Hotel.

The live auction also will include original artwork by Bill Steidel, of Cannon Beach, the event's signature artist. The artwork, which Ward described as "beautiful," is titled "Winter Ice," and depicts a wintry village scene reminiscent of Steidel's childhood.

New York-born Steidel is skilled in numerous creative communications, including music, writing, painting, sculpting and book illustrations. He works with a variety of media and encompasses several themes. Steidel, his wife Sally and their son Sam have operated the Steidel's Art gallery, on South Hemlock Street in Cannon Beach, for more than 50 years.

Tickets to the gala cost \$100 per person; \$65 is tax-deductible. For reservations, call the foundation at 503-717-7604.

### Growing the surgery department

Since its first Festival of Trees in 1997, the Providence Seaside Foundation has raised more than \$1.4 million. In 2014, the festival raised \$143,000 to support the new north coast Providence ElderPlace program in Seaside. Proceeds also went to partner with Medical Teams International to provide free mobile dental services to uninsured adults and children.

This year, proceeds from the gala event will be used to purchase new surgical equipment, including an enhanced video camera with internal scopes and an intense light source and digital printers, to provide "the very latest in surgical technology" at Providence Seaside Hospital, Ward said. The new equipment, which costs approximately \$210,000, will increase the scope of procedures available at the hospital.

"This new technology is going to be phenomenal for our community," Ward said, adding it "will provide accessibility to more complex surgeries here on the north coast that are not currently being performed."

"The idea is really to keep people closer to home instead of having to go to Portland for surgeries," Ward said.

The foundation's board of directors will cover the cost of the equipment not raised during the Festival of Trees. Ward said the fundraising goal for the event this year is \$150,000.

# Operation Christmas Child 'really brings the community together'

Boxes from Page 1A

coordinated effort between families, church congregations, schools and other organizations.

"It really brings the community together," volunteer Mark Kenny said of Operation Christmas Child, a project of Samaritan's Purse.

He and his wife Lorri are in their fifth year as relay center coordinators for the program at North Coast Family Fellowship, but the Seaside church has been a drop-off site for much longer.

During National Collection Week, volunteers assisted the Kennys in overseeing the drop-off site for a few hours each day. When the shoeboxes arrived, volunteers sorted, secured and put them into large cartons, which then were taken to the state collection center near Portland.

From there, the boxes will be taken to a processing center in California, where they will be searched for items that can't pass through United States Customs and Border Protection, Lorri Kenny said. For instance, boxes are not to include used or damaged items; war-related items, such as toy guns, knives or military figures; chocolate or food; out-of-date candy; liquids or lotions; medications or vitamins; breakable items; or aerosol cans. If someone at the processing center does remove an item because it is dangerous or inappropriate, they replace it with another item, Lorri Kenny assured.

Finally, over the next year, the shoeboxes will be delivered to children ages 2 to 14 in developing countries across the world. Sometimes delivery can take up to several months, because of the mode of transportation required for getting the shoeboxes to remote locations.

The Kennys' granddaughter, 7-year-old Kylie,



KATHERINE LACAZE/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Volunteer Tom Parke (left) and relay center coordinator Mark Kenny organize cartons of shoeboxes filled with toys and gifts at North Coast Family Fellowship for Operation Christmas Child during National Collection Week, Nov. 16 through 23.

who worked as a volunteer this year, said her favorite part of the program is "helping children get to have stuff," although she also enjoyed handing out stickers and candy to those delivering boxes to the drop-off site. She and her family put together two boxes — one for a girl and one for a boy.

All participants specify if their shoebox is for a boy or girl and from which age category: 2 to 4 years old; 5 to 9 years old; or 10 to 14 years old. Lorri Kenny said, for some reason, they generally get more packages for girls and for children in the younger age groups; the oldest category often "is lacking," she said.

Many of the volunteers this year were congregants at North Coast Family Fellowship, but "anybody that would be really excited about Operation Christmas Child could help," Lorri Kenny said. Anyone can prepare a box, regardless of religious views, but Samaritan's Purse is an evangel-

ical Christian humanitarian organization.

Samaritan's Purse's church partners in recipient countries help get the shoeboxes into the hands of children at their churches, local public schools and other sites. Lorri Kenny said she likes the program because "it's not just about the box; the box is where it starts." Children are invited to their local church for a multi-week religious discipleship program, which ends with a graduation ceremony, and receive Bibles in their native language.

Some children recipients share their stories about getting a shoebox, and their testimonies often reveal what an impact the shoeboxes have and how happy they are to receive even seemingly mundane items, like pencils, notebooks, balls or brushes.

"We forget how much we're blessed," Lorri Kenny said. "We take a lot for granted in the United States."

Mark Kenny agreed it often takes giving up so little

to pack a shoebox for a child and it can be a big eye-opener for people to see "what we can do without." Since becoming a leader, he said he's enjoyed "being able to work with a team of people that's really excited about (the program) and to listen to testimonies afterward about how (the boxes) affected children's lives."

The testimonies are collected and shared on the organization's website.

Sometimes a recipient will start a correspondence with the giver of his or her shoebox. Lorri Kenny said her grandson, Dylan Maccomb, now has a pen-pal in the Philippines because of a shoebox he packed with his family last year.

North Coast Family Fellowship, the only drop-off location in Clatsop County, is part of the larger northwest team, along with sites in the Portland-metro area, Tillamook and others, for the program.

"We always hope to make a mark bigger than we did last year," Lorri Kenny said.

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